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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between students' and instructors' views of the promotion of feedback and the students' perception of the effectiveness of the instructor as a teacher. The subjects of the study were faculty members and students from the College of Nursing at the University of North Dakota. Data were collected through a semantic differential scale form with 60 questions, including three questions that reflected instructors' interest in giving the students feedback on their work, their willingness to accept feedback from students, and whether instructors provided the opportunity for feedback to take place. The data indicated that there is a strong positive relationship between students' perception of a teacher's promotion of feedback and the students' view of teacher effectiveness. Results also suggested that, if an instructor does not promote feedback (in the eyes of the students), the instructor is seen as a less effective teacher than one who does promote feedback. When a severe discrepancy existed between the students' perception of the teacher's promotion of feedback and the instructor's perception, the instructor was regarded as a less effective teacher than one who does promote feedback. No significant correlation was found between students' and instructors' view of feedback. There was also no significant correlation between the instructors' view of the promotion of feedback given to the students and the students' view of the instructors' effectiveness. The findings suggest that, if, for any reason, it is useful to know how students view various aspects of their education, it is necessary to address the questions directly to them. (JD)

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STUDENTS' AND
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FOREWORD

The Bureau of Educational Research and Services tries to publish the results of student and faculty research that has the potential for improving educational programs and opportunities of various constituencies in the state, the region, and the nation. During the past several years a wide variety of subjects has come off the press and disseminated through various channels.

This monograph reports on the research activities of three members of the University of North Dakota College of Nursing. Mss. Voeller and Volden, and Dr. Carl were interested in knowing about how students and instructors perceived feedback and how those perceptions compared. Additionally, they wondered if perceived teaching effectiveness related with perceived feedback.

The results of their inquiry is reported in this publication. The Bureau hopes that it might prove to be useful to instructors at all levels of education.

Larry L. Smiley, Director
Bureau of Educational Research
and Services

INTRODUCTION

As a part of the continuing education efforts for nurse educators, the University of North Dakota has adopted the TIPS (Teacher Improvement Project System) program developed by the University of Kentucky, Center for Learning Resources, College of Allied Health Professions. TIPS is a program that helps update and refine the teaching skills of health educators, whether they be faculty members, staff nurses, or health professionals in other areas. During the TIPS course of instruction, data was gathered relating to various aspects of education. One group of data dealt with the perceptions of feedback by the teacher and students and the effectiveness of the teacher.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between students and nursing instructors' views of the promotion of feedback and the students' perception of the effectiveness of the instructor as a teacher.

RELATED LITERATURE

There is a wealth of information contained in studies which have investigated the effects of feedback on learning. Each year much is added to this body of knowledge relating to feedback. Variables such as feedback rates, oral versus written feedback, positive versus negative feedback, and so on have been examined. However, one area that has been left largely without investigation is the subjects' opinion of feedback and whether that opinion may be related to their opinions of other factors in the learning process.

A number of studies have examined feedback variables that seem to be related to one another. Emmer¹ conducted a study in which he was interested in assessing how instructors judged the differences in their opinion of classroom conditions and the opinions of their students. In particular, he wanted to know whether feedback from students affected the way an instructor taught. On most of the scales that Emmer studied there was no difference between the behavior of teachers before and after receiving student feedback--his hypotheses were not supported. The study did, however, provide a useful starting point for evaluating the important concept of transfer of opinions. Two of his scales were "instructional effectiveness" of the teacher and the teachers' "receptivity to students." For some reason, the researcher reported only main effects of each scale and did not look into the interactions of these scales. The closest he came to was that with the exception of one scale, all main effects displayed no significant dif-

ference. It is, of course, impossible to guess what the interactions might have been. This was unfortunate since looking at the interactions would provide some guidance as to the nature of the degree of transfer among the various scales.

Evidence does exist to support the idea of transfer of perceptions. Tettenbaum² and Critterdon and Norr³ found that student values, on scales unrelated to academic life, did play an important role in the students' evaluation of their teachers and learning. It was not possible for the students to evaluate the teachers without using their value system as one component of that evaluation. If there is a relationship between outside perceptions and perceptions of education, then it may also be reasonable to suspect that a similar relationship exists among the many opinions which deal with teaching effectiveness and feedback.

Koch⁴ was interested in what effects the kind of feedback (positive, negative, average) would have on the performance of an individual. The feedback administered, during the study, was of a mild nature and the results showed no difference with regard to the final performance of the subjects. However, other interesting trends were apparent. Although the final performance of the three test conditions were not different, the subjects' attitudes toward the feedback and its usefulness were significant. Those subjects who received positive feedback were quite pleased with the concept of feedback and felt that it enhanced their skills (learning). Those subjects who received negative feedback, however, did not feel that it helped them to learn. So while the type of feedback the subjects received did not affect performance, the type of feedback did affect their attitude toward not only feedback but also

their acquired skills (they felt that they had learned less). Positive attitudes concerning feedback produced positive attitudes toward the effectiveness of their learning.

Later studies looked at other variables. Blue⁵ examined several variables (e.g. oral versus written feedback and demographic data) which were possibly related to attitudes and feedback. Among the ideas he tested were the students' attitudes toward him, their attitudes toward school, and their attitudes toward teachers. The study yielded some useful results. Unfortunately, each of these attitudes were reported separately. He did not report his findings on the interactions. (Parenthetically, in the review of the literature, it was found that many researchers tended to ignore the interactions since these did not address their specific hypotheses.) Nonetheless, the study was useful in that it took a step toward analyzing student attitudes on several pertinent scales.

Some research, however, has been done which is beginning to focus on the correlations of attitudes on scales dealing with feedback. Brown⁶ found that there is a significant correlation between student's evaluation of the teacher (on many scales) and the student's academic performance. If the student is doing well in school, he is apt to feel that this is in part due to an effective, caring teacher. To further support this idea of transfer of opinions Clark⁷ also reported that characteristics found in teachers in schools with high pupil achievement included better rapport with students. These teachers exercised more warmth, support, and responsiveness to students and the students were more enthusiastic about school, had longer attention spans, were viewed by the teach-

er as more intelligent, were better behaved, and more pleasant to teach. Although the cause/effect relationship has not been definitely established, these studies do provide some evidence to support the hypothesis that positive attitudes in one aspect of student opinion leads to positive attitudes in related matters.

HYPOTHESES

There is much evidence to suggest that attitudes of students on one dimension (e.g. personal values, attitudes toward, school, attitudes toward teachers) will affect their attitudes on other dimensions. While these studies implied that these correlations may exist, none address the question directly. This encouraged us to investigate the possible relationships between student/instructor perceptions of feedback and the students' view of the instructors' effectiveness as a teacher. Based upon the above discussion, three hypotheses were formulated.

- Hypothesis 1: Instructors who are perceived by students to promote feedback will also be perceived by students to be effective teachers.
- Hypothesis 2: Instructors who are perceived by students as not promoting feedback will be perceived by students as less effective than those teachers who promote feedback.
- Hypothesis 3: Where there is a discrepancy between instructor's and student's perceptions of the teacher's promotion of feedback, the students will rate the instructor's teaching as less effective than when no discrepancy exists.

SETTING AND SAMPLE

The subjects in this study were faculty members and students from the College of Nursing at the University of North Dakota. The instructors who participated were required to do so as a portion of an ongoing faculty development effort at the college. The data were gathered on faculty members who participated in the Teacher Improvement Project Systems course (TIPS). The students who evaluated each of the faculty, were first semester sophomores, juniors, or seniors enrolled in course work within the college.

EVALUATION INSTRUMENT

Data was collected in conjunction with TIPS using the Form for the Enrichment and Assessment of Teaching (FEAT). This instrument was developed, validated, and tested for reliability by the University of Kentucky College of Allied Health Professions by Serkland, Sockloff, and Lacefield under the auspices of the W. K. Kellogg Foundation.

The FEAT form is a semantic differential scale. Faculty and students were directed to rate statements which referred to the teaching that took place in each instructor's classroom. FEAT included sixty questions, fifty-two of which evaluated the instructor on one of several dimensions (e.g. effectiveness of teaching, psychological environment in the classroom, use of ancillary materials). Each of these scales had a composite score. Only the "effectiveness of teaching" score was used in this study. This score ranked the effectiveness of each instructor in a percentile manner. (In this instance, each instructor was compared to 204 other classrooms in which this evaluation was administered. The University of Kentucky supplied this data.)

We were also interested in instructors' and students' perceptions of feedback in the classroom. There was no scale on the FEAT instrument designed to give this information as a composite score. However, there were three questions which addressed this dimension. These were questions 12, 13, and 27, which were as follows:

12. "The instructor was available for outside consultation or discussion."
13. "The instructor offered helpful feedback comments on written assignments."
27. "Constructive criticisms from students were considered and implemented when possible."

These three questions were chosen since they reflected some of the important components in the promotion of feedback. Question 12 helped indicate whether the instructor provided the opportunity for feedback to take place. Question 13 indicated the instructor's interest in giving the students feedback on their work. Question 27 indicated his/her willingness to accept feedback from the students. All three of these questions addressed a major factor in assessing feedback.

LIMITATIONS

The two major limitations in the study dealt with population selection. As a matter of practical constraints, we used one faculty, intact, for our data base. This faculty may or may not be representative of the population of all nursing instructors. Second, all participants were required to be involved in the TIPS course. In some instances given a choice, this may not have been done voluntarily.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

The analysis used in this study was the Pearson Correlation. Comparisons were calculated among the following variables: the students' perceived effectiveness of the instructors' teaching ability, the students' perceptions of the instructors' feedback, and the instructors' perceptions of the feedback given to students.

RESULTS

The data supported all three hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1: The data indicated that there is a strong positive relationship between the students' perception of a teacher's promotion of feedback and the students' view of the effectiveness of the instructor. If one dimension is positive, then it is likely that the other will also be positive.

Hypothesis 2: Hypothesis two is the converse of hypothesis one. The data suggest that if an instructor does not promote feedback (in the eyes of the students) then the instructor will be seen, by students, as a less effective teacher than one who does promote feedback.

Hypothesis 3: When a severe discrepancy exists between the students' perception of the teacher's promotion of feedback and the instructor's perception, the instructor is regarded as a less effective teacher than one who does promote feedback.

Additional data: Other interesting data also surfaced during the course of this study. One bit of information was that there is no significant correlation between students' view and the instructors' view of feedback. It is not possible, therefore, to predict the responses of one group from the responses of the other.

Another bit of information that is consistent with the other findings is that there is no significant correlation between the instructors' view of the promotion of feedback given to the students and the students' view of the instructors' effectiveness as a teacher. The SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences)

scatterplot was used for this correlation. The results indicated an almost random distribution of responses.

In order to measure the discrepancy between the students' and instructors' view of feedback, a fourth variable was also included which subtracted the average student scores for each instructor from the instructors' scores. (Difference = instructor's view of feedback - student's view of feedback.) Table 1, which appears on page 12, summarizes this data.

Table 1
Pearson Correlation of Data

	Effective Teaching	Teachers View of Feedback	Students View of Feedback	Difference
Effective Teaching	1.0000	.0804	.7962*	.5017*
Teachers View of Feedback		1.0000	.0242	.7107*
Students View of Feedback			1.0000	.6860*
Difference				1.0000*

n = 27
*p < .01

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

In this study we were dealing exclusively with perceptions--opinion. As was expected, differing opinions were held by different groups; in this case, students and instructors. It is readily apparent that the views of these two groups differ greatly with regard to their perception of the teachers' promotion of feedback. In Table 1, it may be seen that there was no significant correlation on this variable. By knowing the responses of either group alone, it would not be possible to make an accurate prediction as to how the other group responded. This correlation was, in fact, quite low. Since a wide gap may exist between the students' and instructors' views of what is happening in the teaching/learning process, teachers and administrators should be cautious not to make decisions on data from only one source.

The data indicate that perceptions of the students on the promotion of feedback and the effectiveness of the teacher are significantly correlated. Indications are that if a student believes there is a good flow of feedback between the instructor and students, then the student will also have a favorable attitude toward the effectiveness of the instructor as a teacher. The converse is also true. Poor attitudes concerning the promotion of feedback will result in poor ratings of the instructor effectiveness as a teacher. This leads us to believe that there is a certain amount of transfer from student opinion on one dimension to their opinions on other dimension.

One of the major findings of the study was that if a great

discrepancy exists between the attitudes of the students and the instructors, then it is highly probable that the students will not have a favorable attitude toward the instructors' teaching effectiveness. In almost every case, the instructor rated himself/herself higher than the student. While a small difference in these evaluations do not indicate problems, the large discrepancies could point out problem areas. This is especially true when the problem areas deal with student attitudes.

The data from this study suggest that instructors may be poor judges of student attitudes. If, for any reason, it is useful to know how students view various aspects of their education, then it is necessary to address the questions to the students directly. The idea that the instructors' evaluation is parallel to the students' is apt to be wrong. The almost total lack of correlation between the instructors' and students' responses should underscore the seriousness of the error in this reasoning.

In summary, students' attitudes on one attitude scale may well reflect his/her attitudes on other scales. When marked discrepancies exist between students' and instructors' attitudes on some dimensions, it is likely that the students will possess negative attitudes on scales which evaluate the instructor effectiveness.

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